

# A Comparative Study of the Metaphorical Usage of "Weather" in English and Chinese

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## Abstract

Weather plays a very important role in our daily life. From different cultures to different societies, the concept of "weather" has become a common form of expression, which can not only help us understand everything in the world, but also help us cope with the complex environment better. Based on the metaphor theory in cognitive linguistics, this paper takes the words describing weather conditions as the research object, discusses the cognitive basis for the emergence of the metaphor of "weather", analyzes the differences in the usage of the metaphor of "weather" in English and Chinese, and explores the reasons for such differences, so as to It further proves that abstract and complex emotions can be expressed with the help of concrete natural phenomena - "weather", which is conducive to the better use of it to express rich emotions.

## Keywords

Weather, Metaphor, Comparison between English and Chinese, cognition.

## 1. Introduction

The expression of "weather" is not only limited to language, but also profoundly reflects human cognitive thinking, which is fully explained in George Lakoff 's book *Metaphors We Live By*. (Chen, Wan, 2017) In our daily life, weather is closely related to us. As a result, many of the words used to describe the weather are imbued with profound meanings, thus enabling us to better understand and discuss more abstract concepts. The purpose of this paper is to explore the role of metaphor in cognitive theory and try to extract effective metaphors about "weather" from English and Chinese bilingualism.

## 2. A Brief Introduction to Metaphor Theory

Metaphor theory in Cognitive linguistics is the most important part of Cognitive linguistics. This theory proposes that people use proverbs and metaphors to express emotions, thoughts, and concepts, and this cultural connotation affects the use and understanding of language. Metaphor theory and Cognitive linguistics are closely related because they both emphasize the concept of language. The basic principle of metaphor theory is that the function of metaphor is the foundation for understanding and expressing a complex concept. The structure of metaphor can not only express meaning, but also emotions and thinking patterns. Therefore, Cognitive linguistics believes that people use metaphor to understand and express some concepts of commendatory and derogatory meanings. Cognitive linguistics regards metaphor as a cognitive phenomenon. Lakoff&Johnson (1980) believes that the foundation of metaphor formation is the similarity between the source domain and the target domain. The understanding of metaphorical meaning actually involves mapping more specific experiences from the source domain to the more abstract target domain, in order to achieve the goal of re understanding the characteristics of the target domain. (Chen, 2013)

According to metaphor theory, these metaphorical structures have two levels: surface level and latent level. The surface level uses specific phrases or words to express a concept, while the

latent level represents a deeper level concept that can express the speaker's views, understanding, and emotions. Cognitive linguistics regards metaphor theory as an important theoretical basis to understand the background of language use and understanding. Therefore, metaphor theory can help linguists better study language in cultural communication, such as the ability to express emotions, thinking patterns, and concepts.

### 3. The Metaphor of "Weather" in English and Chinese

The foundation of metaphor is the similarity between things, and metaphor has two conceptual domains, one of which is understood through the other domain. In daily life, people use relatively familiar and concrete things around them to understand, think, and talk about abstract and difficult to understand things. Thus, by using words that represent specific things to express abstract concepts, a metaphorical cognitive approach and metaphorical language that are interrelated between different concepts have been formed. When we use the basic category of weather to express and explain the categories of other cognitive domains, we form the metaphor of weather. Weather metaphor refers to the words and sentences used to describe objective weather conditions. It can not only be used to objectively express language, but also to express abstract emotions and thoughts through metaphorical language. The metaphor of weather makes our understanding of things more vivid and vivid, and it has irreplaceable universal significance for human life and communication. (Lu, 2010)

When it comes to weather, people can't help but think of natural phenomena such as wind, rain, thunder, lightning, etc. Humans also constantly monitor daily temperature conditions, such as hot, cold, or cool. And these words that describe weather conditions are also metaphorically used and widely applied in people's daily lives. (Zheng, 2005) The following will elaborate on the vocabulary of "weather" in English and Chinese languages from a metaphorical perspective.

#### 3.1. Vocabulary and Metaphors Expressing Natural Phenomena

##### 3.1.1 Mist

In English, fog is divided into fog, mist, and haze based on its concentration. When the air is filled with fine droplets of water, it is difficult for people to see things around them clearly. Therefore, English and American people use these three words to describe the problems that arise when understanding, memorizing things, or concentrating on work.

Frost can describe a discouraging atmosphere, as well as a person's unfriendly behavior and cold attitude. For example, 'a frost smile or welcome' or 'The party was a frost.'

There are also metaphors that indicate a cold tone and indifferent attitude. For example, 'There are a touch of frost in her voice.'; 'My suggestion has been received with frost approval.'; 'Her remote father quickly married a frost snobbish woman who didn't like her new daughter at all.'

We use 'someone is in the fog of some kind' to indicate that someone is unable to think clearly due to a strong emotion or excessive use of drugs or alcohol. For example, 'he is in the fog of confusion.'

The phrase 'in a fog' means not awake, confused. For example, 'Jane always seems to be in a fog.' The adjective "foggy" originally refers to being shrouded in fog, metaphorically meaning that someone has poor memory or is unable to think in an organized manner. For example, 'His memory is foggy.'

The phrase 'not have the foggiest (idea)' means completely unknown or knows nothing. For example, 'Do you know where she is? Sorry, I haven't the foggiest.'

Haze is similar in usage to fog, metaphorically referring to something that hinders people from clearly understanding, remembering, or concentrating on something. For example, 'His mind was a haze of fear and confusion.' and the adjective hazy also metaphorically refers to those with

unclear minds and vague memories. For example, 'a hazy memory/idea' or "I'm a little hazy about what to do next."

And mist has the meaning of blurred vision. For example, 'Her eyes misted with tears.' And we use 'lost in the miss of time' to refer to something that occurs too long ago and makes it difficult for people to discover or understand. For example, 'The magic city was lost in the misses of history.'

In Chinese, fog also has some metaphorical uses. It can be compared to not understanding and difficulty understanding things. For example, "Wu Li Kan Hua" (Originally referring to old age with blurred vision, looking at flowers is like passing through a layer of mist. In modern Chinese, it is often used to describe not seeing things accurately.); "Yun Li Wu Li" (Commonly used to describe confusion and confusion in thinking. It means that people do not have a clear idea when speaking or thinking, as if the path is unclear in the clouds.); "Yi Tou Wu Shui" (Describing being confused and confused. Very confused, as if feeling in the fog.)

It can also be used as a metaphor for the gathering of many things. For example, "Wu Ji Yun He" (Describing a multitude of things gathered together.); "Wu Qi Yun Yong" (A metaphor for the rapid emergence of numerous things.); "Yun Zheng Wu Ji" (Like the gathering of clouds and mist. Describe numerous.)

### 3.1.2 Rain

The commonly used expression for rain is "rain", sometimes also known as "shower". The word "shower" is used in metaphor and can be said to be a large or large number of things, such as 'A shower of something', which often refers to a large or large number of things that appear unexpectedly at the same time.

Rain has many metaphorical expressions. Rain can mean adversity. For example, 'After rain comes fair weather.' The phrase 'rain of flowers' means a lot. For example, 'He fell under the rain of blows.'

There is also the phrase 'rain on someone's parade' that means throwing cold water to dampen the mood. For example, 'They had planned to go to the beach at the weekend, but the weather just trained on their parade.'

The phrase 'as right as rain' means complete recovery. For example, 'All you want is rest and fresh air and good food and you'll be as right as rain.' The idiom 'raining cats and dogs' indicates that the rain is very heavy.

In Chinese, there is the term "Ji Shi Yu" used to describe timely help, or to describe someone or something who can rescue a person or thing in danger at a critical moment.

There are idioms that express the relationship between a man and a woman, such as: "Yun You Yu Zhu" (Describe the lingering affection between men and women.); "Yun Qing Yu Yi" (It means the state of clouds and rain. Or it refers to the feeling of a male or female party.); "Yun Zhao Yu Mu" (Originally referring to the ancient mythological legend of the Wushan goddess Xingyun and rainfall. Metaphor of love and gatherings between men and women.)

### 3.1.3 Wind

Common words for wind include "wind", "breeze", "whirlwind", "storm", and so on. Phrases such as 'the winds of change' and 'the winds of discontent' are used to discuss situations that seem likely to cause something to happen or change, especially those that seem unstoppable. 'Someone breezes in or breezes into a place' refers to someone who seems carefree and comes to a place very easily. 'Someone breezes through a difficult situation' refers to someone successfully handling a difficult situation without showing any signs of concern about it. People feel relaxed and comfortable in breezy weather, so "breeze" often creates a pleasant feeling. For example, 'You are very bright and breezy today!'

'A Whirlwind of event' represents many events that occur rapidly one after another. 'Something goes down a storm' refers to something being warmly welcomed by the target audience.

In Chinese, there are idioms that metaphorically describe a cheerful expression, such as "Chun Feng Man Mian"(It means a smile. A metaphor for a person's joyful and comfortable expression. Describe a friendly and pleasant face.) and "Ru Mu Chun Feng"(It is a metaphor for being with people of high moral character and knowledge, and being influenced by them. It is like being blown by the spring breeze to be with someone of high moral character.)

For example, "Feng Liu Yun Ji" describes people who are elegant and talented in drinking. It also describes the article's poetic and artistic charm as elegant and implicit.

There are idioms that metaphorically describe very fast speed, such as "Zhu Feng Zhui Dian"(It means chasing after the fast wind and lightning.); "Zhui Feng Nie Ying"(The meaning is that the horse travels at a fast pace. Describing speed as extremely fast.); "Zhui Feng Che Dian"(Describing speed as extremely fast. Many pointed horses gallop at full speed.); and "Feng Chi Dian Che"(The meaning is to describe being very fast, as fast as the wind blows lightning.)

#### 3.1.4 Thunder

Thunder is a loud noise emitted by clouds when they discharge, with great power, transitory nature, and imminent triggering. The loud noise and power bring danger to people, which is similar to the emotions of people experiencing anger. Therefore, in English and Chinese, thunder is often associated with loud noise, powerful power, or anger as a metaphor. The loud sound and power of thunder are both metaphors of human anger or anger, at which time the event of anger and angry emotions will erupt simultaneously. For example, 'his thunderous expression'; 'thunderous people'; 'thunder at sb'; 'the thunder of five hundred war drums'.

'The thundering of something' refers to the loud sound of something. For example, 'thunders of excuse'; 'The children's camera thundering downstairs.'

When using "thunder" as a verb, it also means someone speaking loudly, shouting or fiercely attacking with strong emotions, such as 'He thundered against gambling.'

In Chinese, there is the term "Lei Bang", which metaphorically refers to violent slander. There is a phrase 'Xun Lei Bu Ji Yan Er Zhi Shi' which is used to describe extremely fast speed. There are descriptions of loud sounds such as "Ru Lei Guan Er"(Usually used to describe a message or sound that is widely spread, well-known, and widely circulated.) and "Huan Sheng Lei Dong"(The cheers echoed like thunder. Describe a warm and joyful atmosphere.).

There are sayings such as "Da Fa Lei Ting"(Describing anger, tantrum, and loud scolding.); "Bao Tiao Ru Lei"(It means to shout and jump in anger, as fiercely as thunder; Describe the appearance of being anxious, angry, and angry.); "Lei Ting Wan Jun"(Describing great power that cannot be stopped.), which are used to describe anger or power. The explosive weapons used in military affairs, such as "Di Lei"(landmines), "Shui Lei"(mines), and "Yu Lei"(torpedoes), evoke the immense power of landmines.

#### 3.1.5 Cloud

"Cloud" is used as a metaphor to refer to an event that disrupts a situation that is annoying. It is also used to talk about things that conceal a situation or make it difficult for people to understand. 'A particular kind of cloud' refers to something that has a negative effect or can disrupt a situation. 'Something or someone is under a cloud' refers to people believing that someone or something is suspicious, as if they have made a mistake or something has gone wrong. This makes it difficult for this person to continue working normally, and it is difficult for the thing to continue functioning normally. 'Something casts a cloud over one's situation' refers to something that makes someone's situation less hopeful and less optimistic. 'There is a cloud hanging over someone' refers to someone feeling unhappy about something annoying happening, which may be their fault, and they don't know what the consequences will be, which

makes it difficult for them to have hope for the future. 'A cloud appearances in a particular situation/a cloud appearances on the horizon' refers to the occurrence or appearance of something that makes a situation less pleasant. 'Something clouds someone's judgment or thoughts' refer to something that makes someone's judgment or thinking less accurate than usual.

In Chinese, "Yun Qi Long Xiang" is used as a metaphor to describe heroes who rise from the present. "Ting Yun Luo Yue" is a commonly used phrase in letters in the past to express the remembrance of relatives and friends. "Tun Yun Tu Wu" is a description which is originally described as a Taoist who cultivates qi and does not eat grains, but later appears to allow people to smoke. "Yun Cheng Fa Ren" is a metaphor for the beginning of a career. There is a metaphor for valuing money and status as "Fu Yun Fu Gui". There is a metaphor for a person's unparalleled status or knowledge of "Qing Yun Du Bu".

### 3.2. Vocabulary and Metaphors Expressing Natural Phenomena

#### 3.2.1 Heat

The metaphorical usage of "hot" in English is rich, and 'hot food' can be used to describe the spiciness of things. Other common idioms include: 'be in/get into hot water' means to get into trouble; 'Go hot and cold' means to be worried or anxious; 'Go/sell like hot cakes' means best-selling; 'Hot under the collar' indicates the meaning of anger; 'Hot on sbs/sths heels' indicates tight tracking; 'Hot potato' metaphorically refers to a tricky and troublesome matter.

The noun form "heat" is also commonly used to refer to something very strong, often a provocative emotion, such as 'in the heat of an argument' when people argue fiercely; 'Take the heat out of sth' means to reduce enthusiasm for something and temporarily stop doing it; 'Take the heat of a crisis' can be expressed as taking the heat of a crisis. For example, the original meaning of 'heat up' is heating, while the metaphorical meaning is that things become intense, such as: The game did not heat up until the second half.

In Chinese, there is a metaphor for the extreme suffering of people's lives, known as 'Shui Sheng Huo Re'; There is a description of a passionate or emotionally charged 'Re Xue Fei Teng'; There is a description of being extremely moved or very sad, with tears streaming down one's eyes, known as 'Re Lei Ying Kuang'; There is a metaphor for seizing favorable opportunities and conditions to strike while the iron is hot, known as 'Chen Re Da Tie'.

#### 3.2.2 Warm

Compared to "hot", "warm" is a comfortable temperature that people prefer, so it is often used to describe friendly and caring emotions towards others. For example, to describe a friendly person, we use 'a warm person'; Use 'a warm welcome' to describe someone's arrival; To describe a person's disposition, we use 'a warm personality'; Use "warm-hearted" to describe a friendly and compassionate person. The verb phrase 'warm to sb' refers to having a good impression of someone and adopting a proactive attitude. For example, 'At first people were already of him; Then they warmed to him.' 'To do sth warmly' refers to doing something with a warm and positive attitude. For example, 'She greeted the visitor warm.' The noun form "warmth" is used to metaphorically express feelings of friendliness and concern for others, such as 'the warmth of one's family'.

"Warmth" is also used in Chinese as a metaphor for a feeling of warmth and closeness. For example, a warm current surged up in my heart. In idioms, there is a metaphor for the depth of one's learning experience, which is only known by oneself as 'Leng Nuan Zi Zhi'; There is a description of being very concerned about people's lives as 'Xu Han Wen Nuan'; There is a description of "Nuan Yi Bao Shi" that describes a life of abundance and abundant food and clothing.

### 3.2.3 Cold

There are phrases in English that indicate lack of enthusiasm or friendliness. For example, 'give sb a cold shoulder'; 'Give sb a cold look/welcome'; 'Cold blooded/cold-hearted'; 'Cold shoulder'; 'Out in the cold'. The meaning of 'be cold comfort' is simply ineffective comfort; 'To get cold feet' means to retreat in the face of battle;

In Chinese, coldness is associated with feelings that are not enthusiastic, caring, or friendly. There are metaphors such as "Leng Bing Bing"; "Leng Ku"; "Leng Dan"; "Leng Yu"; "Leng Luo"; "Leng Mo"; "Leng Yan".

Cold has other meanings in Chinese, referring to silence and not liveliness, such as "Leng Qing" or "Leng Chang"; It can also refer to things that are unpopular or have no one involved, such as "Leng Huo" or "Leng Men". Cold also contains sarcasm, disdain, and disapproval, such as "Leng Yan Leng Yu", "Leng Chao Re Feng", and "Leng Xiao".

## 4. Reasons for Differences in the Metaphorical Usage of "Weather" in English and Chinese

Metaphor can be seen as a means of expressing ideas, a way of perceiving the objective world and a reflection of culture. It can help us better understand our surroundings and can serve as a bridge for us to communicate with others. Language is a carrier of culture, and different cultural backgrounds will lead to different forms of expression. For example, the cultural backgrounds of Britain and the United States may be different, but they can both be expressed through the use of metaphors, illustrating the universality of metaphorical cognition and the commonality that exists in the cognition of the British and American nationalities and the Han Chinese. Bolinger points out that the cultural differences between the two languages of Britain and China are inevitable, while their commonalities can not be ignored. After all, cultural differences are absolute and inevitable, and between the same or similar is relative and accidental. (Zheng, 2005)

In both English and Chinese, the metaphorical use of 'weather' mostly involves transforming natural phenomena into abstract concepts to describe a specific situation. Chinese weather metaphors often express objective weather conditions, such as "rain" or "snow", and are rarely used to express abstract thoughts or emotions; In English weather metaphors, there are many words that express abstract concepts with a specific artistic atmosphere.

The differences in the metaphorical usage of "weather" in English and Chinese are mainly caused by different social cultures and life experiences, including physical environment (geographical location and climate), social context (social power relations), and cultural context. (Chen, Wan, 2017) Various ethnic groups and countries have formed different historical cultures in different historical developments, each accumulating a large amount of historical allusions. Due to differences in history, geography, customs, and other aspects between English and Chinese, there are inevitably differences in the expression and meaning of metaphorical concepts.

Due to differences in regional culture, different ethnic groups may use different language forms to express the same phenomenon or thing. As described in the poem "Ode to the West Wind" by the British poet Xue Cai, "The Trumpet of a philosophy! If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" Due to the geographical location of Britain, the westerly wind brings warm and humid spring to the British people. In Chinese, the westerly wind represents coldness, bleakness, and sharpness. For example, Ma Zhiyuan, a prose writer of the Yuan Dynasty, wrote in Shaqiusili, Tianjing, that "In the twilight, rooks croak on a moribund tree entwined with wizened vines. Beside the smoke spiraling up the household cooking dinner, water babbles under the bird. On



the ancient path, an emaciated horse plods against the blowing west wind. The setting sun loses its radiance. The heart-broken man loses his home.

The differences in weather metaphors between English and Chinese also reflect their different understandings of language expression. In Chinese, the focus of language expression lies in precise description. As long as the meaning it expresses can be accurately expressed, there is not much need to express artistry or sensibility; However, English emphasizes the use of language to express thoughts and emotions, using metaphorical language to express abstract ideas more vividly and with a richer artistic atmosphere.

In summary, comparing the weather metaphors in Chinese and English reveals significant differences between them. The metaphors between the two also have different language characteristics, expressing the unique characteristics of different cultures.

## 5. Conclusion

Cognitive linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson pointed out in their collaborative work *Metaphor We Live By* that metaphor is not only a linguistic phenomenon, but also a way of thinking. It is one of the basic ways of human cognition and survival. It is rooted in language, thinking and culture. (Zheng, 2005)

Taking the weather metaphors in Chinese and English as examples, a comparative study of the differences between them is a meaningful linguistic study. The weather metaphors in Chinese and English reflect the unique characteristics of each culture. Most weather metaphors in Chinese objectively describe weather conditions, while English more reflects its emotions and rich literary atmosphere, which also reflects the huge differences in expressing ideas and emotions between Chinese culture and English culture.

Abstract and complex emotions are expressed through specific natural phenomena, and their cognitive basis mainly stems from the similarity of human physiological reactions and physical experiences. The physical experience of humans with weather and weather changes forms the basis for our mapping of abstract emotions. People both domestically and internationally use weather phenomena such as wind and rain, lightning, and frost to describe emotions, but due to factors such as cultural patterns, the metaphorical meanings of the same weather phenomenon words are also different. This article further proves that abstract and complex emotions can be expressed through specific natural phenomena - weather, by interpreting the metaphor of "weather". It is hoped that this article can inspire readers to explore weather metaphors in Chinese and English more deeply, better understand the differences between them, and better use them to express rich emotions. (Chen, 2013)

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